



# FLATLINERS

● DIRECTOR Joel Schumacher says in the notes of his film: "Flatliners doesn't pretend to know what happens after death. Just because you're dead for a couple of minutes doesn't mean you understand eternity any more than being alive for two minutes means you understand life".

Just for the record 'flatlining' is what happens on electro-cardiac monitors when a person has no vital signs of life, i.e. no heartbeat or brain action and the line on the screen goes flat.

All Schumacher is trying to do is to defend himself against the missiles that will be hurled at him because 'flatliners' in his film all have bad trips in the hereafter which rather blots out the popular placebo about the soul drifting effortlessly into a paradise of light and bliss.

In his film, the 'flatliners' concerned, a group of five medical students, technically experience death.

Led by Nelson (Sutherland) they conduct night time secret experiments in the lab of their medical school. The fame-hungry Nelson, goes first in his quest to make his mark on medicine.

Using his formula he goes under, into a stunning world of the other side which is quite visually disarming.

'Dead' for a certain amount of time, his fellow-experimenters revive him from his death-dream, using the technique he/they devised and hoped and prayed would work.

One by one they start to 'flatline'. Joe, Rachel and Labraccio (not Steckle), vying with each other, going under for a little longer to explore their near-death experience better than before resuscitation.

One by one the effect of their trips start to show results. In different ways they are all haunted by past nasties who come to square with them. Atonement and all that. They have to work it out if being alive is going to be worth it.

MARIANNE GRAY  
reviews a matter of life  
and death drama starring  
KIEFER SUTHERLAND,  
JULIA ROBERTS and  
KEVIN BACON

## VERDICT

● It's new, it's outrageous and, it is weird and wonderful! I came out feeling like I'd had a shot of something to make my head spin.

Using a group of very contemporary, very bright medics and setting them and their visionary idea against the pure gothic background of their crumbling old university hospital in a near post-holocaust city at the time of a hallucinogenic Halloween spree, makes for very lively watching.

The low-key, focused performances of Sutherland, Bacon and Julia Roberts keep it all deep in reality while outside wildness rages. The teetering balance of sane and insane hovers in every frame of this dark, unusual film of incredible style and elegance.

It's a heady mix, a fabulous drama. Although the script is quite flawed and strong scenes are diluted by silly chatter versus heavy medic-speak, the neat direction and strong acting pull it through.

It should put Julia Roberts (*Pretty Woman*)

up in the league of Serious Actress, consolidate Sutherland's dramatic reputation and propel William Baldwin (Alec's brother) into the bigger pool.

Producers  
MICHAEL DOUGLAS / RICK BIEBER

Director  
JOEL SCHUMACHER

Screenplay  
PETER FILARDI

Photography  
JAN DE BONT

Music  
JAMES NEWTON HOWARD

116 Minutes - Certificate 15  
(COLUMBIA TRI-STAR)

Nelson	....	KIEFER SUTHERLAND
Rachel	....	JULIA ROBERTS
Labraccio	....	KEVIN BACON
Joe	....	WILLIAM BALDWIN
Steckle	....	OLIVER PLATT
Winnie Hicks	....	KIMBERLY SCOTT
Billy Mahoney	....	JOSHUA RUDDY
Rachel's father	....	BENJAMIN MOUTON

RATINGS  
SCRIPT 7

PERFORMANCES 9  
PRODUCTION 8

DIRECTION 8  
ENTERTAINMENT VALUE 9

FILM